

PEER REVIEW

For awarding the academic position of Associated Professor
in the The Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts

Plovdiv

Sole Candidate

Senior Assistant Nadezhda Kozma Kuzmanova, Ph.D.

The requirements and latest amendments to the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act require the candidates to have a serious and multifunctional activity that forms their presentation for the future higher academic degree. In the field of music, this polyvalence is completely understandable, because it is not enough for a music tutor to be a mere performer on the stage, but also to possess serious theoretical knowledge and pedagogical skills to familiarize his graduates with the diversity of music as a living process and sound mechanism.

The documents submitted by the candidate, Nadezhda Kuzmanova, fully meet these expectations. Her work includes interesting and diverse performances over a few decades, and it is only natural that this should be her presentation for her future academic growth.

The minimum national requirements are fully met by the applicant. Her PhD thesis on an interesting topic – The Chamber Music of Gabriel Faure – is defended successfully, which requires a serious and deep knowledge of French music in general and the place of the remarkable romantic composer in its development. The monograph entitled The Chamber Music of Gabriel Faure (Through the Pianist's Eyes), was published in 116 pages as a natural extension of the textual content of the PhD thesis. ISBN 978-954-2963-42-4, 2019. In the context of this topic, we can highlight a concert associated with the candidate's

research – The Romantic world of Gabriel Faure – together with Prof. Nedyalcho Todorov (violin), AMDFA Concert Hall, 12.06.2011 in it. C of the eligibility table. Admiration is caused not only by the selection of repertoire, but also by the stage partner. Prof. Nedyalcho Todorov is not only an active chamber performer, but also a creative person with a high general and musical culture. The Bulgarian premiere of the integral must be noted too – “For the first time in Bulgaria, the program brought together all the work of Gabriel Faure for violin and piano within one concert.” The candidate logically puts this concert as one of the main contributions to her creative work.

Another concert worthy of attention is the performance of the concerts for 2, 3 and 4 pianos by Johann Sebastian Bach. Performed with the participation of the Collegium Musicum – Bankya and renowned partners – Georgi Petrov, Rayna Petrova, and Arno Hovagimyan, this concert is one of the first of Nadezhda Kuzmanova, which is at the beginning of her creative career.

Her widespread searches are reflected in concerts such as 114 Songs by Charles Ives in collaboration with Neli Koycheva (alto) at the Boris Hristov Music Center, Sofia, 13 October 2007. The integral performance of the vocal works of the famous American composer is included in the Seventh Festival of Bulgarian and American Music and has been presented in other domestic cities.

The interest in non-standard concert performances is a major feature of the Nadezhda Kuzmanova's stage activity. One of them is a **Japanese Songs Concert**, performed together with the singers Yoshiko Colon and Neli Koycheva, AMDFA Concert Hall, Plovdiv – 15.01.2013. The pianist describes precisely this event in the cultural life of Plovdiv – “The Japanese singer and conductor Yoshiko Colon presented traditional Japanese songs by old and contemporary Japanese masters before a Bulgarian audience for the first time.

Some of the songs were performed in a duet with the singer Neli Koycheva. The program was also accompanied by multimedia with Japanese paintings or photos.” This presentation of the Japanese songs turns into a wider representation of part of the culture of this geographically remote and curious destination.

I will try to miss the other performances included in the statement. Each of them has its place not only in the personal growth of n. Kuzmanova, Ph.D., as a musician, but also in the cultural life of the country. One important item is the concert Slavic Composers Songs, together with Neli Koycheva and Japanese singers, Orbit Hall, Kobe, Japan – 14.11.2015. Along with the most famous representatives of the Slavic music culture in the world, such as Tchaikovsky, Chopin, Rachmaninov, etc., the performers also promote a wide range of the Bulgarian music culture. The names of Dobri Hristov, Georgi Spasov, and Parashkev Hadzhiev can be noted among the presented composers.

The candidate has a certain interest in chamber music and different composition and specific genre ensembles. In addition to the already mentioned wide range of ensembles, a serious concert event is also The Five Concerts presenting integrally the piano music of Franz Schubert for four hands, together with the pianist Rayna Petrova in Balabanov's House, Plovdiv, 10.03.2001 – 22.12.2001. The music for the piano ensemble is one of the leading in the creative heritage of the brilliant Viennese master and is a serious challenge for any duo. It includes both small forms and larger works, each with different interpretative problems. I would like to note that the five concerts of the integral have been performed within less than a year, which is a true performance feat for the Petrova-Kuzmanova duo. This event also took place at the time of the initial steps of a long series of concerts in the candidate's creative biography and showed her interest in serious music deprived of any excess glamor. Another

concert with the same chamber partner is the Russian Piano Music for Four Hands Concerto, Balabanov's House, Plovdiv – 02.03.2002. An interesting project is the rarely performed cycle Prayer Visions for 2 pianos by Olivier Messiaen on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the birth of the composer, together with Prof. Georgi Petrov, Arno Hovagimyan, and Rayna Petrova, Hall 9 of the National Palace of Culture, Sofia, 9 December 1998, within the Viva la Musica Festival, organized by the National Palace of Culture. The performance with Velislava Karagenova – The Music for Two Pianos Concert, AMDFA Concert Hall, Plovdiv – 24.04.2000, has a program premiere of One American in Paris by George Gershwin in transcription for two pianos by Svetoslav Karagenov and Camille Saint-Saëns – Variations on a Beethoven Theme, Claude Debussy – Sirens, Maurice Ravel – Bolero. An interesting creative combination is the ensemble of the concert of 1 June 2005, AMDFA Concert Hall – Harmonie du soir – the singer Neli Koycheva and the piano duo Katya Vasileva and Velislava Karagenova. On the principle of alternating vocal and instrumental performances of works by the French authors J. Massenet, Debussy and G. Faure.

As an addition to her concert performances from that period I would like to point out her participation as a soloist at the Mozart Piano Concerto in D minor KV 466 with accompaniment of the Symphony Orchestra of Targu Mures, Romania, under the great Bulgarian conductor Radosveta Boyadzhieva, 13.06.1997.

An important place in Nadezhda Kuzmanova's creative path is her training and realization as an organ player. A graduate of our great organ player, Stefan Dalchev, in recent years she has presented a number of works for organ or ensemble works for organ and other instrument. As a supportive creative expression in the list for minimum national requirements, the candidate included

her participation in the Celebrated Incarnations Concert – AMDFA Concert Hall, Plovdiv, 18.12.2016, where four premieres sounded in her interpretation: Franz Liszt – Hail, Virgin Mary, together with the Gaudeamus Academic Mixed Choir, (Kuzmanova as pianist, Stefan Dalchev as organ player), August Ritter – Organ Sonata in D minor, Gaetano Piazza – Sonata for 2 Organs, together with Vanya Baleva, Felix Borowski – Adoration, transcription for organ and piano (with Prof. Albena Dimova – piano). To the Bulgarian organ performance premieres I would also like to add Clifford Demarest – two plays for organ and piano (Rhapsody and Fantasy) with Prof. Albena Dimova as her stage partner again, Grand Aria for organ and piano (with prof. Madlen Bachvarova (USA), and Gustav Adolf Merkel – Sonata for 4 Hands and 4 Feet, together with Stefan Dalchev (one indisputable recognition for her teacher, to be together on the stage for the premiere performance for our country). Last but not least, I would like to point out the world premieres in Nadezhda Kuzmanova's repertoire: Velislav Zaimov – Sonata for Piano and Organ (once again with partner Prof. Albena Dimova), as well as her own (of Kuzmanova) organ transcription based on the original work by Francis Poulenc – Morning Serenade – a choreographic concert for piano and 18 instruments (again an ensemble with Prof. Dimova).

The candidate's ensemble performances, together with Albena Dimova, have a peculiar peak – the four-hand Forgotten Masterpieces Concert, held on 28 February of last year in the Event Hall of Hr. Botev Society. The concert program features intriguing titles – two adolescent works by L. van Beethoven, Libenssturme by Schubert, and Sonata by Fr. Poulenc, as well as two premieres – Symphony in B Minor arr. for Piano 4-hands by Claude Debussy, and Chants de Terroir op.73 by Vincent D'Indy. I would like to acknowledge the aspiration of Nadezhda Kuzmanova for mastering new performance obstacles, such as the unknown, but challenging works of renowned and less popular authors.

Recognition of the high level of mastery of the organ and the concert activity is her participation in a concert dedicated to the memory of our great conductor and a symbol of the Plovdiv music community, Krikor Cetinyan. In the concert she performs the organ party in Listen to my Prayers by Felix Mendelssohn with soloist, Mila Mihova, and the main organ party in Requiem by Gabriel Faure, together with a choir (alumni and followers of Maestro Chetinyan) and an instrumental ensemble from Plovdiv State Opera with Krastin Nastev as conductor.

The candidate's high level of knowledge and concert activity regarding the various keyboard instruments from the Baroque era to the present day is the reason for her to hold Music of the Old Times Workshop Concert in the Saedinenie Hall, a comparison between a harpsichord, a piano and an organ. The colleagues, Valentina Slavova (soprano), Neli Koycheva (contralto), and Ivaylo Velichkov (flute) also took part in the event.

I would like to point out an important event that demonstrates the pedagogical qualities of the candidate – her master class on the topic The Role of the Pianist in Creating Interpretation and Ensemble, 12 November 2015, Rameau Theater, Kobe, Japan. This is a serious acknowledgment of her performing abilities and their transformation into in-depth methodological knowledge that she has the opportunity to teach to musicians abroad.

Organization activities and projects play a significant role in N. Kuzmanova, Ph.D., overall work. Emblematic of the Department of Piano and Accordion at AMDFA is the Contemporary Piano Culture Club. As chair of three conversation meetings in 2011, resurrecting the creative work of the pianists, Asen Kantardzhiev, Arno Hovagimyan, and Todor Kyuvliev, longtime lecturers and members of the department, the presenter not only recalls facts trough

stories and records from the BNR Fund, but also makes the connection necessary today between different generations of leading musical personalities not only within AMDFA, but also nationally.

Among the covered minimum national requirements indicators, one rarely noted fact, especially among actively playing colleagues is noted – the presence of quotations from Nadezhda Kuzmanova's monograph in Lyudmil Petkov's book *Unknown and Rarely Performed Works for Piano Duo from the XVIII-XX Centuries*, 2019, p. 21. This proves the scientific relevance and applicability of her PhD thesis, published for the future interpreters of Gabriel Faure's chamber music.

The numerous awards at various contests won by graduates of Dr. Kuzmanova are well-deserved, and in addition to the personal honors of her students such as Boris Petkov, Tsveta Pancheva, and Alia Hanse, she received a special award from the Rector of AMDFA – 2016 diploma for high activity in the educational process and creative achievements of graduates.

Last but not least, I would like to mention the reviews published in popular editions about the various creative demonstrations of the candidate over the years – *Musical Horizons* and *Art Spectrum* journals.

I believe that the overall work of Sen. Asst. Nadezhda Kuzmanova, Ph.D. is respectable and her presence is an honor for the Department of Piano and Accordion at AMDFA. Her academic growth is a logical step in her career development, supported by her previous activity in various fields of music performance, academic and pedagogical work, as well as the skills sought recently to prepare projects with a view to integrating innovative ideas for the department development in a new reality. After all this said, I recommend the

Honorable Scientific Jury to award Sen. Asst. Nadezhda Kuzmanova, Ph.D.
with the Academic Position of Associated Professor in the Professional Field
8.3. Musical and Dance Art.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized capital letter 'R' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

Sofia, 18 August 2019

Prof. Rostislav Yovchev, Ph.D.